Postcard Stories

The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of a variety of writing styles and use the writing process. In order to minimize the amount of work you are required to do, you will write three separate short stories, called “postcard stories.” The challenge is “to create a dramatic, short, snappy piece in only 250 words.” This type of fiction is also known as “flash fiction.” It’s a literary power punch to the gut. Because the length is quite limited, often some elements of a short story (conflict, obstacles, resolution, etc.) are forced to remain unwritten and otherwise hinted at or implied instead.

Here’s your job: You will write **3** different postcard stories, each having a heavy emphasis on one of the following: characterization, setting, and plot. Each story may be **no longer** than 250 words!! Once you have completed each story, choose your best one for polishing and submit for evaluation.

Your postcard story will be due on\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Please hand in your good copy postcard, as well as the rough copies of all three of your postcard stories. You will be evaluated on the following:

Rough copies: /10

Mechanics: /5

Emphasis of style: /15

Appeal: /5

Peer-editing: /5

Total: /40

Not sure where to start? Here are some “starting lines” that you may use to get started:

* Write about a conflict between a parent and a child
* write a conflict about an employer and an employee
* Write about an ant who one day decides to rule the world
* write about a robot’s conflict with a ninja
* write about a prisoner on death row
* write about a pebble and a blade of grass who want to occupy the same space.

Writing Tips:

**Make your words work:**

Use strong, active verbs, and few, if any, linking verbs and adjectives. There’s no time in flash fiction for a lot of description or detail for much characterization (unless that’s your focus). You have to depend on your readers to fill the gap.

Pack as much action in as possible. Additionally, Dialogue-driven stories are great for quick action, character, and conflict development.

**How to “ flash” the elements of a story:**

**Setting** can be told in a sentence (e.g. – “she watched as the monkey clung to the bars of its cage” tells us the story is set in a zoo, probably during the day since the zoo is open, and it’s at the monkey cage).

**Generally**, you won’t have room for more than two characters (also – characters do not have to be human, or even animate!)

**Conflict** – your tension – could simply be a difference of opinion. It can be verbal, physical, or mental. It doesn’t always have to be villain vs. hero.

**Resolution** – your conclusion – “small” works best in flash fiction – don’t go for a miraculous, drawn out resolution. Additionally, flash fiction actually lends itself to surprise endings – but try not to be too surprising!

\*\*\***Change** MUST occur in the protagonist, the antagonist, or the reader’s mind for your story to be flash fiction.